(d) if not, reasons for denial of interest free credit to Tamil Nadu dealers;

(e) whether it is a fact that other States like Andhra Pradesh get interest free credit for long periods;

(f) the reasons for this dual policy; and

(g) whether MMTC has encouraged this practice for some reasons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The quantum of fertilizers sold in Tamil Nadu in 1995-96 and 1996-97 (Upto Jan.'97) is given below:

Fig. in ('000 MT)

Product	1995-96	1996-97 (Upto Jan.'97)
Urea	10.9	18.05
MOP	16.0	19.20

(c) to (g) MMTC's existing policy to extend short term interest free credit to all parties against Bank Guarantee/Letter of Credit. This is uniformly applicable to all States.

Loss due to some diseases to the Pepper Plants

1520. SHRI JOY NADUKKARA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the cultivation of pepper plants are facing a threat to the cultivation due to some diseases which affected the plants during the last few years resulting in destruction of almost all the pepper plants in the districts of Idukky and Wayanadu in Kerala;

(b) which are the areas where pepper cultivation was mostly done; and

(c) the steps Government have taken to help the agriculturists in checking the diseases and to help them financially?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) The major pepper growing districts of Kerala were affected by Quick Wilt disease of pepper.

(b) Black pepper is grown as mono crop to some extent in higher elevation and hill slopes in Idukki & Wyanad districts; and

(c) During the 8th Plan, Deptt. of Agriculture and Cooperation is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Integrated Programme for Development of Spices with an outlay of Rs. 125 crores. Under this programme, for undertaking prophylactic plant protection measures to check the incidence of quick will disease, an allocation of Rs. 27.90 crores has been made for the 8th Plan period. Farmers are provided subsidy to the extent of 50% of the cost of plant protection chemicals, limited to Rs. 1860 per ha.

Freeze of Payment by US for the Import of Urea

1521. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of USA had frozen US $25 million that India was sending to Libya for payment of the import of Urea;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by India to get the amount released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The amount involved is US $2.5 million and not US $ 25 million. MMTC had opened a Letter of Credit (L/C) for US $2.5 Million in favour of National Oil Company, Libya for purchase of 13,817 MTS of urea, through Indian Overseas Bank. The L/C was confirmed by Union Bank of Switzerland, Indian Overseas Bank as per instructions of Union Bank of Switzerland, remitted the amounts through Chase Manhattan Bank, New York who froze this amount, the entire